

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2141

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, VN, VS, CB, LA

SUBJ: SOVIET VIEWS OF INDOCHINA

REF: A. SAIGON 704

B. 16245

C. STATE 26495

1. SUMMARY. YURI KUZNETSOV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE MFA'S
SOUTHEAST ASIAN DIVISION, UNDERLINED MOSCOW'S COMMITMENT TO
THE PARIS AGREEMENT AS THE BASIS FOR A SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH
VIETNAM IN A CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON FEBRUARY
13. HE PORTRAYED HANOI-PEKING RELATIONS AS SUBJECT TO INEVITABLE
STRAINS. ON CAMBODIA, HE REFLECTED AN AMBIVALENT ATTITUDE
TOWARD SIHANOUK AND AGAIN SEEMED NOT TO BE WELL INFORMED
ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS THERE. ON LAOS HE STATED MOSCOW'S STRONG
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SUPPORT FOR THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, AND SAID THAT MORE SOVIET

AID WAS IN THE WORKS. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICAL COUNSELOR CALLED ON KUZNETSOV ON FEB 13 TO CONTINUE PERIODIC EXCHANGES ON INDOCHINA. HE OPENED CONVERSATION BY REITERATING POINTS PARAS 2 AND 3 REF A AND DREW ON REF B IN EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF RESUMPTION OF TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO SOUTH VIETNAMESE SIDES IN THE FORUMS SPECIFIED BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT. HE THEN ASKED FOR KUZNETSOV'S COMMENTS ON EXTENSIVE SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF THREE RECENT ANNIVERSARIES --I.E. SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF ESTABLISHMENT SOVIET-DRV DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, AND 45TH ANNIVERSARY FOUNDING OF LAO DONG PARTY.

3. KUZNETSOV REPLIED THAT SOVIETS HAVE EMPHASIZED TWO MAIN POINTS IN TREATMENT OF THESE ANNIVERSARIES. ONE IS THEME OF PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT AND POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION. THE OTHER IS ENDORSEMENT OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AS THE BASIS OF A SETTLEMENT OF THE VIETNAM PROBLEM. MOSCOW HAS CONSISTENTLY STOOD FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, SAID KUZNETSOV. HE AGREED THAT THE PARIS TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES SHOULD BE RESUMED, BUT SAID THAT THE MEANS FOR BRINGING THIS ABOUT WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT BY THE TWO SIDES THEMSELVES.

4. WHEN QUESTIONED RE HANOI'S OMISSION OF THE TERM "GRADUAL" FROM PHRASE "GRADUAL MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION" IN ITS REPRINTING OF KOSYGIN'S CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO PHAM VAN DONG (REF C) KUZNETSOV SAID THAT HE HAD NOT NOTICED THIS PARTICULAR DISCREPANCY, BUT STATED THAT HANOI HAD ONLY SUMMARIZED THIS MESSAGE. IN ANY CASE, HE SAID, HE DID NOT ASSIGN ANY PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO THIS FACT. THE SOVIETS AND VIETNAMESE HAVE OFTEN TALKED ABOUT THE QUESTION OF REUNIFICATION, AND THE VIETNAMESE HAVE ON MANY OCCASIONS MADE IT CLEAR THAT RESOLUTION OF THIS ISSUE MUST BE A LENGTHY GRADUAL PROCESS WHICH REQUIRES A "STEP-BY-STEP" APPROACH.

5. ON HANOI-PEKING RELATIONS, KUZNETSOV SAID THAT MOSCOW HAD ALSO NOTED THE ABSENCE OF COMMENTARY ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF PRC-DRV DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CHINA IS OBVIOUSLY COMPLEX, SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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KUZNETSOV. THE TWO PEOPLES HAVE LIVED NEXT TO EACH OTHER FOR CENTURIES. THE HIGH POINTS OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY SINCE THE 8TH CENTURY HAVE BEEN THOSE PERIODS OF GREATEST INDEPENDENCE FROM CHINA. ANXIETIES ABOUT CHINA ARE STILL STRONG AMONG THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. ON SOME MATTERS THE DRV DOES NOT SUPPORT THE PRC POINT OF VIEW, BUT OF COURSE THEY MUST GET ALONG. LOOK AT THE MAP, HE SAID, CHINA SITS ALL ALONG VIETNAM'S NORTHERN BORDER. CHINA MUST BE OF GREAT CONCERN TO HANOI.

WHEN ASKED WHETHER CHINESE SEIZURE OF SEVERAL OF THE PARACEL ISLANDS HAD CONTRIBUTED TO A WORSENING OF PEKING'S RELATIONS WITH HANOI, KUZNETSOV SAID THAT MOSCOW HAD NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF THIS. THERE WAS NO COMMENTARY ON THIS CHINESE MOVE BY HANOI, HE SAID. HOWEVER, ALL VIETNAMESE, SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN, BELIEVE THAT THESE ISLANDS BELONG TO VIETNAM. "SOMETIMES SILENCE ALSO SPEAKS," HE SAID.

6. KUZNETSOV THEN ASKED FOR OUR VIEWS REGARDING CAMBODIA. HE POINTED OUT THAT SOVIETS HAD NO DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN PHNOM PENH AND THAT INFORMATION ABOUT CAMBODIA WAS SPOTTY HERE. ANYTHING WE COULD DO TO INFORM SOVIETS AS TO CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA WOULD BE APPRECIATED, HE SAID. IN RESPONSE, POLITICAL COUNSELOR NOTED THAT THE MILITARY SITUATION AROUND PHNOM PENH APPEARED TO HAVE WORSENERD IN RECENT WEEKS, BUT THAT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT ONLY SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM WOULD BE THROUGH NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THE KHMER ROUGE FORCES REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE. KUZNETSOV RESPONDED THAT SIHANOUK, WHO WAS THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAD INDEED OFFERED TO NEGOTIATE SEVERAL TIMES, BUT NOT WITH LON NOL AND SIX OR SEVER OTHER CAMBODIANS, WHOM HE HAD SPECIFIED. POLITICAL COUNSELOR REPLIED THAT SUCH PRE-CONDITIONS WERE HARDLY CONDUCIVE TO GETTING TALKS STARTED. IN ANY CASE, SIHANOUK DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE MUCH CONTROL OVER THE INSURGENT FORCES. KUZNETSOV INDICATED AGREEMENT WITH THIS AND ADDED THAT THE ATTITUDES OF HANOI AND PEKING WERE ALSO CRUCIAL IN THIS REGARD, BUT IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHAT THEY WERE.

7. ON LAOS, WE ASKED KUZNETSOV RE CURRENT SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD COALITION GOVERNMENT AND SPECIFICALLY RE PROSPECTS FOR SOVIET AID TO SOUVANNA. KUZNETSOV REPLIED THAT MOSCOW STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE COALITION GOVERNMENT AND HAS ENDORSED THE ENTIRE PROCESS WITH BROUGHT IT ABOUT. ON AID, HE MENTIONED THAT BOTH

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PETHRASY HAD SIGNED A NEW AGREEMENT ON JANUARY 4 DURING HIS VISIT TO MOSCOW. THE AGREEMENT PROVIDED FOR THE SOVIETS TO CONSTRUCT A HOSPITAL AND CERTAIN OTHER PROJECTS IN LAOS. TALKS WERE NOW GOING ON IN VIENTIANE ON IMPLEMENTING THE AGREEMENT, HE SAID, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF MATERIALS AND THE SUPPLYING OF GOODS. THE PROCESS HAS BEEN SLOW, HE ACKNOWLEDGED, AND NOT MUCH HAS BEEN PROVIDED THUS FAR, BUT THIS WAS A PROCEDURAL PROBLEM. MOSCOW DEFINITELY SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT OF PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA, BOTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY, AND "WE WILL DO MORE," HE SAID. KUZNETSOV COMMENTED THAT PERHAPS THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE "HAD NOT ADEQUATELY BEEN PUBLICIZING" SOVIET AID TO LAOS.

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